come to a standstill due to shortage of funds. With the beginning of the month of February, the frequency of water supply in the pipes goes down to once in two or three days. In many wards of the city, the water pipes are completely dry. The city continues to suffer this trauma untill July. The execution of Rajghat Project stands postponed. According to newspaper reports, the Project Division set up for Rajghat Dam Project is proposed to be shifted to Guna. If this project is shifted outside Sagar, it will adversely affect the ongoing drinking water project for Sagar city and further aggravate the problems of the people. I, therefore, earnestly request the Central Government to take over this project to provide adequate funds to the State Government under a special scheme so that the people of sagar may get relief from the problem of drinking water.

(iii) Need to Dispense with 'Users Charge' being Levied on Passengers Going Abroad from Calicut Airport

[English]

SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN (Cannanore): Sir, it is highly essential that the users charge being levied upon passengers going abroad from Calicut Airport be discontinued without further delay in order to ensure justice and equal treatment to such passengers.

The users' charge of Rs. 500/- per head on both tickets of adults and children is being levied on all passengers going abroad from Calicut Airport since October, 1995. At that time, objections to such a discriminatory charge was overcome with an assurance that the charge would be levied only over a period of six months. However, in spite of this assurance, the charge is still being levied and is a big burden upon all passengers going abroad and especially those travelling with family.

This charge is in addition to the Rs. 300/- per head by way of foreign travel tax.

Many passengers even from the Northern Districts of Kerala are, therefore, forced to take flights from Trivandrum where no such charge is being levied. The passengers are deeply agitated over this indiscriminate charge and I seek the intervention of the hon. Minister for Civil Aviation to ensure early discontinuation of such a levy. Thank you.

(iv) Need for Construction of Sluice Gates to Check Fresh Floods in Katihar District, Bihar

SHRI TARIQ ANWAR (Katihar): Sir, under the Master Plan, Water Resources Department in 1974 had constructed the Mahananda embankment to stop the floods originating from the rivers like Ganga, Mahananda and Koshi entering the Katihar district. But the embankment proved to be a curse rather than a boon as it created more serious problems for the farmers of the district. The land on which the embankment was constructed accumulated fresh floods. With the result, thousands of acres of land could not be cultivated and the farmers had to flee to other districts for work.

To clear the fresh flood waters, it was decided to construct Sluice Gates in Manihari, Amdabad, Azamnagar, Pranpur etc. but the State Government has not been able to construct the Gates. I, therefore, urge upon the Central Government to take up the urgent steps for the construction of Sluice Gates at the required places in Katihar district.

(v) Need to improve the Functioning of Telephones in Rural Areas of Tiruppattur Parliamentary Constituency, Tamil Nadu

[Translation]

SHRI D. VENUGOPAL (Tiruppattur): In the past few years, through certain Technology Missions, an impetus was intended to be given to provide telecommunication facilities etc. in rural areas. But the availability of modern communication facilities is still eluding the rural areas. The avowed policy of the Ministry of Communications is to link all the villages of the country by way of providing them with telephone connections. At this juncture, I would like to bring to the notice of the Government the sorry plight of certain rural telephone exchanges in my constituency. Improvisation and modernisation of already existing rural telephone exchanges should be given priority. The rural telephone exchanges in Northampoondi, Vettavalam, Thandarampattu, Vanapuram, Mallavadi and Veraiyur are at a distance of 15 to 20 Kms. around Thiruvannamalai. Most of these exchanges often meet with service shut-downs due to poor maintenance and obsolete equipment. Many surrounding villages get connected to these exchanges and the telephone link is often found disrupted. Apart from that, a good number of villagers of this area are waiting for long to get telephone connections. The same is the case with rural areas around Tiruppattur town. This industrially backward, agricultural area has sparsely located units of leather industry. So, this area must have improvised communication network to grow and prosper along with other parts of the country. I request the Central Government to take up modernisation work at the earliest in the rural telephone exchanges in Tiruppattur constituency.

(vi) Need to Take Effective measures to Check Sea Erosion in Sunderbans, West Bengal

SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL (Joynagar): Sunderbans area, though rich in flora and fauna and renowned for its Tiger Project, its people are extremely poverty-ridden; there being no industry or even any agricultural activity—as it is very marshy and is a constant

*Translation of the speech originally delivered in Tamil.